Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 16467 061509Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----------032384 070417Z /20
R 061501Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1142
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 16467

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR EG JA OVIP (FUKUDA, TAKEO)
SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER FUKUDA'S VISIT TO MIDDLE EAST

REF: TOKYO 12130

SUMMARY. JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT AND DIPLOMATS, IN DISCUSSING PRIME MINISTER FUKUDA'S FORTHCOMING VISIT, CONVEY IMPRESSION JAPAN IN SEARCH OF MIDDLE EAST ROLE. WHILE STRESSING VITAL IMPORTANCE OF MIDDLE EAST TO JAPAN, THEY TAKE, FOR WHATEVER PURPOSE, EXTREMELY MODEST VIEW OF JAPAN'S CAPABILITY TO HAVE ANY INFLUENCE ON EVENTS. WHILE ITS INFLUENCE COULD CERTAINLY NOT BE DECISIVE, FUKUDA TRIP MAY OCCUR AT A TIME WHEN ANY ADDITIONAL PRESSURE ON ARABS AND ISRAEL COULD BE USEFUL. WE WONDER THEREFORE IF THERE ANY VALUE TO U.S. SUGGESTING FUKUDA ADD ISRAEL TO ITINERARY TO URGE GOI, AS WELL AS ARABS, TO MOVE TOWARD SETTLEMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. ON JUNE 30 POLCOUNS MET WITH MR. HIRANO, FOREIGN AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT OF YOMIURI SHINBON, AND ON JULY 6 WITH JAPANESE FIRST SECRETARY KATO. IN BOTH CASES
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PAGE 02 CAIRO 16467 061509Z

MAIN PURPOSE HAD TO DO WITH PRIME MINISTER FUKUDA'S SEPT. 6-12 VISIT TO EGYPT, SAUDI ARABIA, AND IRAN. HIRANO SAID JAPANESE HAD SUGGESTED FUKUDA STOP OFF IN CAIRO ON RETURN FROM ECONOMIC SUMMIT THIS MONTH, BUT EGYPTIANS HAD DECLINED TO SERVE AS TRANSIT POINT. THUS VISIT PLANNED FOR AS SOON AFTER RAMADAN HOLIDAYS, WHICH END SEPT. 5 OR 6, AS POSSIBLE.

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

2. KATO SAID THAT MR. CHIBA, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF MFA MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICAN AFFAIRS BUREAU, WILL BE IN CAIRO FOR TWO DAYS LATER THIS MONTH IN CONNECTION WITH FUKUDA VISIT. HE REQUESTED MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR FOR JULY 19. (AMBASSADOR MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE, BUT EMBASSY WILL ARRANGE FOR ANY BRIEFINGS MR. CHIBA MAY DESIRE.)

3. JAPANESE ROLE. MR. HIRANO, WHO PREVIOUSLY SERVED AS CORRESPONDENT IN CAIRO, CONVEYED, AS DO MOST JAPANESE DIPLOMATS HERE, IMPRESSION THAT JAPAN IN SEARCH OF A ROLE IN MIDDLE EAST. THEY SPEAK ABOUT TOTAL DEPENDENCE ON MIDDLE EAST OIL AND VITAL IMPORTANCE OF MIDDLE EAST STABILITY AND THEN SHRUG THEIR SHOULDERS AND SAY JAPAN HAS VIRTUALLY NO CAPABILITY TO INFLUENCE SITUATION.

4. COMMENT. WHILE IT TRUE JAPAN IS FAR AWAY, JAPANESE ARE GREATLY ADMIRED THROUGHDUT ARAB WORLD FOR THEIR DISCIPLINE, ORGANIZATIONAL ABILITY AND ECONOMIC POWER. RESPONSIBLE ARABS FURTHER RECOGNIZE THAT JAPANESE ECONOMY IS IMPORTANT TO WORLD ECONOMY AND THEREFORE TO ARABS. IN SHORT, EMBASSY BELIEVES JAPANESE, FOR WHATEVER PURPOSE, TAKE TOO MODEST A VIEW OF THEIR OWN POTENTIAL INFLUENCE ON MIDDLE EAST NATIONS. WHILE THEIR INFLUENCE COULD CERTAINLY NOT BE DECISIVE, EVERY LITTLE BIT HELPS, AND IT OCCURS TO US THAT FUKUDA TRIP MAY OCCUR AT TIME
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WHEN ANY ADDITIONAL PRESSURE ON ARABS AND ISRAEL FROM THIRD PARTY COULD BE DESIRABLE. WE WONDER, THEREFORE, IF THERE WOULD BE ANY VALUE IN SUGGESTING TO JAPANESE THAT FUKUDA ADD ISRAEL TO HIS ITINERARY IN SEPTEMBER IN ORDER TO URGE GOI, AS WELL AS ARABS, TO MOVE TOWARD SETTLEMENT. EILTS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HEAD OF GOVERNMENT VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978CAIRO16467
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780278-0751
Format: TEL
From: CAIRO
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780792/aaaaczlr.tel
Line Count: 100
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 677c827a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 78 TOKYO 12130
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2108426
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRIME MINISTER FUKUDA\'S VISIT TO MIDDLE EAST
TAGS: PEPR, OVIP, EG, JA, (FUKUDA, TAKEO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/677c827a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
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US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014